

Wind Energy Development on State School Trust Lands

Wind energy in Montana has its origins in Livingston, Mont., where some wind power turbines were set up in the early 1980s.

In the late 1990s, as continued dependence on foreign oil encouraged Americans to consider renewable energy resources, Montana was dubbed, "the Saudi Arabia of wind."

Now, five years into the new millennium and a quarter century away from Montana's early wind power beginnings, Montana's first wind farm is now operational.

The Judith Gap Wind Farm straddles Highway 191 in central Montana between Harlowton and Judith Gap. Located on state school trust land and private land, this project with its 90, 1.5 megawatt wind turbines will benefit Montanans in a variety of ways.

On the horizon is the proposed Valley County Wind Energy Project, a 334-tower wind farm to be built north of Glasgow, in the northeast corner of the state.

Interest in developing wind power on state land is growing every day. The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation seeks to support and encourage wind power generation on state school trust lands across our state.

Wind Energy Development
Trust Lands Management Division
Montana DNRC
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Our Mission: To help ensure that Montana's land and water resources provide benefits for present and future generations.

Getting Started

Wind development begins with placing at least one anemometer on a potential wind farm site to collect data. While many places in Montana seem windy all the time, anemometer data is necessary to see if that's really true. Potential wind developers can get a land use license from Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation to place an anemometer on state land to collect wind data. When a good wind site has been identified and wind data collected, the DNRC can release a public request for proposals looking for wind project developers to come forward and offer proposals for wind power development.



Those interested in leasing state land for wind power development can contact Mike Sullivan at 406.444.6660, or visit the DNRC web site at: <http://dnrc.mt.gov/trust/wind/>.

Wind Energy Across Montana

Judith Gap

The Judith Gap Wind Farm sits on both sides of Highway 191 between Harlowton and Judith Gap. Thirteen of the 90, 1.5 megawatt towers are on state land. The school trust has already received nearly \$20,000 for a one-time installation fee of the towers, and future power-production-based revenues are estimated at \$50,000 annually depending on the amount of electricity generated. The towers will produce 130 megawatts of power running at 100% capacity and will provide about seven percent of the electricity needed to serve NorthWestern Energy's 300,000 customers in Montana. Originally developed by Bob Quinn and Wind Park Solutions America, as of late spring 2005 the project is owned and operated by Chicago-based Invenergy, doing business in Montana as Judith Gap Energy, LLC.

Valley County

Texas based Windhunter LLC is the developer of the Valley County Wind Energy Project, which proposes to place 334, 1.5 megawatt turbines on a little more than 20,000 acres of land about 20 miles north of Glasgow. That's 500 megawatts of electricity at 100% capacity. The buildout will take place in four phases beginning with 33 turbines operating at the completion of phase 1 in 2008. The majority of the turbine placement will occur on federal Bureau of Land Management land, but Montana school trust lands will host 43 turbines. State lands make up almost 2,000 acres, or about 10 percent, of the project's total land area. By the completion of phase 4 in 2016, the wind farm is expected to contribute about a quarter million dollars to the school trust annually.

Springdale

The Springdale Wind Farm is in its infancy. The successful respondent to the wind farm request for proposals submitted its phase 2 application, which is currently under review. Located just north of the town of Springdale, about half way between Livingston and Big Timber on I-90, the project will have six towers on state school trust land. The entire buildout is expected to have 45 towers and generate 67.5 megawatts of electricity. Construction may begin as early as spring 2007.

